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ABSTRACT

This ERIC Digest addresses issues concerning training and recruiting minority teachers in question-and-answer format: (1) How is the shortage of minority teachers expected to affect the quality of educational services? (2) Why is minority enrollment declining at the higher education level? (3) What can be done to change the situation? and (4) What are some innovative ways of recruiting minority teachers? Appended are ten references. (SI)

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TRAINING AND RECRUITING MINORITY TEACHERS

By Margarita Donnelly

Since 1980 the number of minority students enrolled in public schools has been rising while the number of minority teachers has been falling. Minority students now make up nearly 30 percent of the elementary and secondary school-age population, while the number of minority teachers has fallen from 11.7 percent to 10.3 percent during the past fifteen years, according to sources cited by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (1987).

The decline in the number of minority teachers appears to result from several factors: increased career opportunities in other fields, a decline in higher education enrollment rates by minorities, the growing use of teacher competency testing (failure rates for blacks and other minorities are higher than for whites), and a dissatisfaction with the teaching profession.

How is the shortage of minority teachers expected to affect the quality of educational services?

Both the National Commission for Excellence in Teacher Education and the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession warned that the decline in the number of minority teachers has serious consequences for both minority and majority children. The race and background of teachers "influence children's attitudes toward school, their views of their own and others intrinsic worth," the Carnegie report stated.

According to the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, "A quality education requires that all students be exposed to the variety of cultural perspectives that represent the nation at large. Such exposure can be accomplished only via a multiethnic teaching force in which racial and ethnic groups are included at a level of parity with their numbers in the population."

Why is minority enrollment declining at the higher education level?

Martin Haberman (1987) projects that by the year 2000 "only 5 percent of all college students will be from ethnic minorities." Even if every minority who graduates from college enters teaching, minori-

ties would still be underrepresented. One of the most important factors affecting black and Hispanic students' decision to attend college continues to be the student's family income level. While the "secondary school graduation rates of minority students increased between 1975 and 1983 . . . they have not been matched by an increase in college attendance," reports the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education (1986).

These enrollment declines reflect the cuts in the federal financial aid programs (the major portion of financial aid available to low income students is the loan program), inadequate high school counseling, and the absence of systematic college recruitment programs for minority students.

Historically the majority of black teachers (more than 50 percent) have come out of black colleges and universities. These institutions are under severe pressures, and many may lose accreditation for their departments of education due to changes in state requirements. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education notes that "since 1978 the number of new teachers produced by 45 predominantly black colleges has declined by 47 percent."

In sum, the central problem, writes Patricia Albjerg Graham (1987), "is that blacks in the U.S. are not getting as good an education as whites are."

What can be done to change the situation?

Any lasting effort to improve the representation of minorities in the teaching ranks must address multiple societal problems. First of all, educational opportunities for minorities must be improved at the elementary and secondary levels. Schools must be made more effective at educating minority students. At the same time, society must address the needs of families living in poverty.

Colleges need to develop better recruitment programs to attract minority students to their campuses and help those students successfully complete higher education degrees. There is a need for imaginative programs developed through private and public resources to attract minority students to education. Federal aid programs for minority teachers or incen-

tives such as loan forgiveness for minority teachers could be used.

The following ten programs were recommended by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education for developing minority teachers: (1) A national scholarship program for minority students who enter teaching, (2) state scholarship programs, (3) targeted high school work-study programs, (4) targeted college work-study programs, (5) a program stressing the need for better articulation between two-year and four-year institutions, (6) assistantships and grants programs, (7) loan repayment incentive programs, (8) support programs for reentry and career changes, (9) special support programs for minorities accepting teaching jobs in ethnically diverse communities, and (10) an institutional grant program to research teacher evaluation models for minority teachers.

What are some innovative ways of recruiting minority teachers?

Some school districts and training institutions, as the following examples show, are making aggressive attempts to recruit and train minority teachers. In the Wake County Public School District (Raleigh, North Carolina) officials realized that the only way to solve the problem long-term is to convince their own minority students to pursue teaching as a career through a program providing college scholarships to minority students (Rodman 1988).

The University of Oregon has developed a statewide effort for recruiting secondary junior and senior minority students into its College of Education. A brochure is distributed to all minority students who took the SAT test and all community college and high school counselors throughout the state. Special recruiters from the College of Education also travel to schools with large minority populations. In 1987 Oregon initiated a tuition waiver program for minority students attending state colleges and universities.

Haberman, noting that "the largest pool of blacks and Hispanics is in junior college," advises universities to establish linkages with local two-year institutions. Another potentially fruitful approach is the recruitment of midcareer minority professionals into teaching. The state of Maryland, for example, is

currently publicizing teaching opportunities to those about to retire at military bases throughout the state.

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